

not permitted by existing law to buy guns are passing background checks and buying guns through legitimate means. In fact, 28 States have automated less than 75 percent of their criminal history records. In 15 States domestic violence restraining orders are not accessible through the NICS system.

Mr. Speaker, each year we see thousands and thousands of people dying because of gun violence. We see so many more being wounded because of gun violence. We have a chance to enforce the laws that are on the books, but we need to help the States get the money to computerize the information that they have. We can save lives, number one. We can cut down on health care costs. And all that can be done by passing the NICS Act.

The bill was passed a couple years ago. Unfortunately, the Senate ran out of time. In January we here in Congress will be working 5 days a week; and I am hoping with that we will have the time to pass the laws that this country expects us to do, bread-and-butter issues to make us safe, to help the economy. We can do this. And I am hoping that the Judiciary Committee will bring up the NICS bill, pass it this year, and get it over to the Senate so that we can pass it there and have the President sign it.

The people spoke on November 7 and we here in Congress, Republicans and Democrats, will be working together. We have very large issues in front of us, but let us not forget about the small issues also, those quality-of-life issues for our constituents. Let us show America that we can do better. This Congress, this next Congress, will do better, and we will do a better job.

PROSECUTION OF TWO U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS: URGING A PRESIDENTIAL PARDON

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOUSTANY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor today to bring to the attention of the House the unjust prosecution of two U.S. Border Patrol agents and to urge the President of the United States to pardon these two men.

Agents Ramos and Compean were found guilty in a Federal court for wounding a Mexican drug smuggler who brought 743 pounds of marijuana across our southern border into Texas. These agents never should have been prosecuted for their actions last year; yet they had been sentenced to 11 and 12 years in Federal prison respectively. Agent Ramos served Border Patrol for 9 years and was a former nominee for Border Patrol Agent of the Year. Agent Compean had 5 years of experience as a Border Patrol agent. By attempting to apprehend an illegal alien drug smuggler, these agents were simply doing

their job to protect the American people. These agents should have been commended for their actions, but instead the U.S. Attorney's Office prosecuted the agents and granted full immunity to the drug smuggler for his testimony against our agents. The drug smuggler received full medical care in El Paso, Texas; was permitted to return to Mexico; and is now suing the Border Patrol for \$5 million for violating his civil rights. He is not an American citizen. He is a criminal.

Although it is clear that these agents fired shots at the drug smuggler to defend themselves and the border they patrol, Ramos and Compean were convicted mainly on the testimony of a habitual drug smuggler who claimed he was unarmed.

A sealed indictment for drug charges forbade the defense for calling into question the integrity of the drug smuggler as a witness. An October 26 article by Sara Carter of the Inland Valley Daily Bulletin quotes two of the drug smuggler's family members who said he "has been smuggling drugs since he was 14 and wouldn't move drugs unless he had a gun on him." Mr. Speaker, this came from the family member who knows this drug dealer. The family member also reported that the drug smuggler had been bragging about the money he is going to get in a lawsuit against the United States of America.

Despite my repeated requests for an investigation of this case and a request by a dozen Members of Congress for the President to pardon the agents, this administration has ignored the concerns of countless citizens who have decried the unjust prosecution of these two heroes. Mr. Speaker, I am calling on the President to listen to the concerns of the American people and to make it a top priority to pardon these two agents.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to share the last paragraph of my November 15 letter to the President: "Mr. President, you have an opportunity to reverse a great injustice committed against two agents who have given years of their life in service to this Nation and who have been unjustly punished for doing their job to protect our homeland. On January 17 of 2007, both Agents Ramos and Compean must surrender themselves to Federal authorities unless action is taken to overturn their sentences.

"I strongly urge you, Mr. President, to listen to the concerns of the American people and use the power of your office to pardon these two agents."

Mr. Speaker, I want to say again in closing that these two agents are heroes of this great Nation, and if anything, they should be rewarded and not crucified by the Federal Government for doing their job.

Please, Mr. President, listen to the American people.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair would remind all Members to direct their remarks to the Chair.

THE LAME DUCK SESSION AND IRAQ

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be back in Washington for the final session of the 109th Congress. I only wish that the current leaders on the other side of the aisle had used their final days in the majority to actually exercise leadership and do something constructive for the American people. Instead we are here for the lamest of all possible lame duck sessions.

Just look at what we have done today. With all due respect to my Resources Committee colleague Mr. SIMPSON, the Southern Idaho Bureau of Reclamation Repayment Act of 2006 really isn't one of the most pressing matters facing our Nation. And what about the Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail Designation Act?

My friends, we are in the middle of a war, a failed war, which a majority of the American people no longer want any part of; a war which, by the admission of the President's own choice for Secretary of Defense, we are not winning. More than 2,900 of our best and brightest American troops are dead because of this failed policy. At least 46,000 have been wounded, severely wounded. And it is not as if they have sacrificed for a noble cause. Iraq, which was supposed to spontaneously blossom into a democracy the minute our troops arrived, has instead been plunged into a civil war as a direct result of the American occupation. In fact, a lot of people are saying that "civil war" is really too generous a term for what is happening in Iraq. It is actually much worse. "Civil war" implies two sides battling it out for state control. What we have here is many factions of thuggish militia and vigilantes terrorizing the streets and killing indiscriminately. The director of the CIA recently referred to the violence as "Satanic."

So why then are we spending the people's time and the people's money deliberating on naming a room in the Capitol? It is no wonder people have lost confidence in Congress to do the Nation's work effectively. Instead of doing what we were elected to do, we are waiting with bated breath for the findings of a blue ribbon commission to tell us what to do in Iraq. Mr. Speaker, this is political cowardice, pure and simple. The Congress doesn't want to confront the problem and doesn't want to challenge the President. So we pass the buck to a group of unelected so-called wise men who appear prepared to